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Farm Broadcasters Letter



Letter No. 2190

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USSR FOOD PRODUCTION UP

State and collective farms in the Soviet Union continue to report significantly higher meat, milk and egg production, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture agricultural attache in Moscow. For the January-October period, total meat production was up 6 pct. Beef was up 5 pct., pork up 8 pct., and poultry up 5 pct. For the same period milk production was up 1.5 pct. and egg production was up 2.8 pct. Livestock numbers were also reported at record levels, even though sheep and goat numbers were down slightly.

U.S. EXPORTS/ IMPORTS ARE UP

Larger wheat and cotton shipments and higher corn and soybean prices lifted U.S. agricultural exports to \$38 billion during fiscal year 1984 that ended September 30. This is up 10 pct. from last year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. On the other side of the coin, U.S. agricultural imports reached a record high. Increased demand and a strong dollar boosted U.S. agricultural imports in fiscal year 1984 to a record \$18.9 billion. That's 16 pct. above the same period in 1983. Imports increased in a wide range of commodities, including coffee, cocoa, tea, sugar, natural rubber, fruits and vegetables. (For more information, call Tom Warden at 202-447-4863.)

U.S. EXPORTS MORE TO LATIN AMERICA

Two major factors boosted the dollar value and volume exports of U.S. agricultural commodities and products to Latin American during the fiscal year that ended September 30, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report. One was higher prices for most grains and oilseeds, and the second was the strong inventory buildups in Mexico and Venezuela. The total value of exports increased \$300,000 to \$5.2 billion. However, the current USDA estimate says that U.S. agricultural exports to Latin America are expected to fall in fiscal year 1985 to about \$4.7 billion. Better weather, lower prices and the inventory buildups this past year will cause the decrease.

U.S. EXPORTS TO EC CONTINUE DOWN

U.S. agricultural exports to the European Community in the fiscal year that ended September 30 fell to \$6.8 billion. That's down from \$7.6 billion in 1983, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report. These exports have fallen each year since 1980. In that year, U.S. exports to the EC were valued at \$9.9 billion. Several factors have contributed to the steady downward trend, including sluggish economic conditions, weak demand for livestock products and larger grain crops in the EC.

U.S./MEXICO SIGN AGREEMENT

Sec'y of Agric. John Block and Mexico's Sec'y of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources Eduardo Pesqueira have signed two agreements. One agreement was an extension of a long-term soil conservation project and the other was a new memorandum of understanding for cooperation in forestry.

United States Department of Agriculture

Radio-Television Division

Phone (202) 447-4330

Office of Information

Washington D.C. 20250

UPDATE ON
US/USSR
GRAIN
AGREEMENT

American and Soviet officials held their regular semi-annual grain consultations for the second year of the new 5-year US/USSR grain agreement. The current agreement calls for minimum annual shipments of 9 million metric tons of grain, of which at least 4 million must be wheat and 4 million corn. The Soviet officials confirmed that so far this year they have purchased about 3.4 million metric tons of wheat and 8.1 million tons of corn. During the meeting, it was also confirmed that just over 7.6 million tons of wheat, about 6.5 million tons of corn and 409,000 tons of soybeans were delivered to the USSR from the U.S. during the fiscal year that ended September 30.

JAPANESE
FUNGUS MAY
BE U.S.
FRIEND

A fungus that destroys gypsy moths in Japan may be field-tested next spring in the U.S. to see if the fungus can do the same damage to American gypsy moths, according to a report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. USDA insect pathologist Richard S. Soper, Jr., said, "The fungus is a potent parasitic killer of gypsy moths in its Honshu Island homeland." In Japan last spring, Soper searched for dead gypsy moths and isolated from them four living strains of the fungus. The strains are now thriving in his laboratory at the Boyce Thompson Institute at Cornell University.

INTEREST
RATES AND
THE U.S.
DOLLAR

U.S. dollar exchange rates on international markets showed almost unbroken monthly increases during the fiscal year that ended September 30. According to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report, the exchange rates reached an 11-year high against the German mark, and set records over the British pound, French franc, and Italian lira. Rising U.S. interest rates, plus a slowdown in inflation rates and a strong economic growth helped spur the dollar. (For more information, call Tom Warden at 202-447-4863.)

WORLD MEAT
PRODUCTION
UP SLIGHTLY

World meat production in 1984 is expected to total about 121 million tons. That's up slightly, less than 1 pct. above last year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A similar increase is forecast for 1985. Beef production will likely increase in 1984 but may decline slightly in 1985. However, world pork production is expected to remain relatively stable in 1984 and should increase slightly in 1985. Poultry meat output is estimated to increase by 2 pct. in 1984 and is anticipated to increase even faster in 1985.

EC SOYBEAN
SITUATION

Stagnant demand for livestock feed plus the fact there are ample supplies of alternative oilseeds and feedstuffs have reduced soybean and soybean meal imports and consumption in the European Community, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Large supplies of domestic oilseeds as well as other soybean meal substitutes such as corn gluten feed, dried milk, distillers byproducts, and palm and copra oil are creating difficult market conditions for soybean meal

EC AGGRESSIVE
IN WHEAT
EXPORT EFFORTS

The European Community continues to market its wheat aggressively with sales to such distant markets as Brazil and Korea, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report. The EC sold 50,000 tons of wheat to Brazil, and to do so, opened its South America tender for the first time in more than a year. The French sold 52,000 tons of wheat to Korea, which could mean less Korean imports from Australia. Australia virtually cornered the Korean feed wheat market last year.

FROM OUR TELEVISION
SERVICE

"Major Issues in Transportation" ... USDA economist Bill Gallimore takes a look at how our transportation system performed this year, and discusses some of the major issues concerned, including railroad abandonment and deregulation. DeBoria Janifer interviews. (261)

"Review of Soviet Agricultural Grain Problems" ... USDA agricultural attache Weyland Beeghly focuses on the current Soviet grain harvest, and what went wrong this year. Jim Johnson interviews. (262)

"Soviet Grain Shortfall: Attitudes and Options" ... USDA agricultural attache Weyland Beeghly continues his discussion on the problems with Soviet grain production, and some of the factors contributing to this situation. Jim Johnson interviews. (263)

"Avian Influenza - I" ... A deadly disease called avian influenza killed millions of chickens and turkeys along the Eastern Seaboard. Dr. Gerald Fichtner with the Department of Agriculture talks about this disease and its affect on flocks. George Holmes interviews. (264)

"Avian Influenza - II" ... USDA economist Floyd Lasley discusses the eradication of avian flu, and how this disease has affected both consumers and poultry farmers. George Holmes interviews. (265)

WORLD COTTON
SETS A RECORD

Larger cotton crops estimated for China and Pakistan have raised world production estimates to a record 80.7 million bales, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report. The new record is 20 pct. above 1983-84 production. Chinese production was increased to 25.3 million bales, over twice the 1978-82 average. Pakistani production was increased to 3.7 million bales, a complete recovery from the weather and insect reduced crop last season. World cotton consumption was reduced slightly from last month's estimate to reflect a downward revision in U.S. mill use, primarily the result of large cotton textile imports.

MILK PRODUCTION
DROPS

Milk production during October totaled 10.9 billion pounds, down 4 pct. from October last year, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report. For the first 10 months of 1984, milk production totaled 115 billion pounds, down 3 pct. from the same period a year earlier. Production per cow averaged 1010 pounds during October, down 14 pounds from October a year ago. The total number of milk cows averaged 10.8 million head during October, down 3 pct. from a year earlier. (For more information, call 202-447-4021.)

VITAMIN B-6 IN
NEW ROLE

Preliminary studies by U.S. Department of Agriculture agricultural researchers show for the first time that vitamin B-6 relieves painful body cramps caused by sickle cell anemia. Sickle cell anemia is an inherited blood disease affecting approximately 50,000 black Americans. In announcing the findings, Robert D. Reynolds, co-researcher in the studies, cautioned that vitamin B-6 is not a cure for the disease. He also pointed out that indiscriminant use of high doses of the vitamin may lead to serious nerve damage.

CHECK NOW FOR
SCABIES

Now's a prime time for cattle producers to look for signs of cattle scabies, according to the administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Bert Hawkins. Hawkins points out that with the return of cold weather the scabies mites are more active and more apt to spread due to more hospitable environment.

OFF MIKE

Barbara Ward is the new farm reporter at WEAU-TV, Eau Claire, WI. The station's news director John Denney reports that Barbara joined WEAU-TV right after she finished her year as the 1983-84 "Alice in Dairyland." She graduated from Univ. of Wisconsin with a degree in agricultural communications ... At the recent NAFB meeting in Kansas City, John Ochs, Sec'y of Agriculture John Block's press secretary, was made an honorary NAFB member ... Also at that meeting, it was announced that the 1986 NAFB summer meeting will be held in Ft. Worth, TX. The 1985 summer meeting will be in Washington, D.C. ... And at the Saturday luncheon, Eddie Albert was guest of the NAFB meeting and remembered back to his days in radio 27 years ago. He also joined as an associate member of NAFB ... Tenure awards were passed out at the meeting, too. Five-year awards went to: Al Pell (WIBC, Indianapolis, IN), John Berg (KSL, Salt Lake City, UT), Dave Russell (WOWO, Fort Wayne, IN), Cece White (KOGA/High Plains Net, Ogallala, NE), Sherry Newell (WJON/WWJO, St. Cloud, MN), and Harry Jenness (KEEZ/Hedberg Farm Net, Mankato, MN). Ten-year awards went to: George Gatley (KBLU/KTTI/W. Ag. Nets, Yuma, AZ), Ken Root (KWCH-TV, Wichita, KS), John Burrow (KGNC, Amarillo, TX), Ron Hays (Oklahoma Agrinet, Oklahoma City, OK), Lynn Ketelsen (Linder Farm Net, Willmar, MN), Cletus Paull (KBUR, Burlington, IA), and Rich Balvanz (WMT, Cedar Rapids, IA). A 15-year award went to Al Gustin (KFYR/KFYR-TV, Bismarck, ND). A 20-year award went to Horace McQueen (KLTU/KTRE-TV, Tyler, TX). And 30-year awards went to: Lee Kline (WHO, Des Moines, IA), George Atkins (Developing Countries Farm Radio Net, Oakville, Ontario, Canada) and Wayne Liles (formerly with KWTU, Oklahoma City, OK, now retired) ... Neal Anderson, formerly with WRAM, Monmouth, IL, has left that station and is looking for a job as a farm broadcaster ... And our congratulations go to Jim Ross Lightfoot, formerly with KMA, Shenandoah, IA, for his successful bid to be elected as Congressman.

FROM OUR RADIO
SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1435...(Weekly 13½ min documentary) Brenda Curtis' special program on the "Aroma of Christmas" proved such a hit last year that we are repeating it again this season.

AGRITAPE/FARM PROGRAM REPORT #1424...(Weekly reel of news features) USDA news highlights; The roots of Avian influenza; More of the farm credit plan; Leaking farm fuel tanks pose dangers.

CONSUMER TIME #917...(Weekly reel of five 2½-3 min features) It's a holiday buyers market; more on thawing that holiday turkey; Preparing turkey safely; A boring Christmas tree story; Selecting a great Christmas tree.

USDA RADIO NEWS SERVICE...Wed, Dec. 5, continued coverage of USDA's Outlook Conference (oilseeds, sweeteners, livestock, etc.); Thurs, Dec. 6, Livestock and poultry outlook report; Fri, Dec. 7, Sugar and sweeteners outlook report; Mon, Dec. 10, World and U.S. crop production reports; Tues, Dec. 11, World ag. supply and demand situation; USSR grain outlook; World tobacco situation; Crop and weather update; Wed, Dec. 12, World grain outlook; Agricultural outlook report; Thurs, Dec. 13, Tobacco outlook. Dial the USDA National News Lines 202/488-8358 or 8359. All material changed at 5 p.m. EST each working day.


JAMES L. JOHNSON, Chief

Radio and Television Division